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IAC DISCUSSION TOPIC 28 January 1957

(Prepared by CIA for Director's Briefing Book)

ALGERIAN CRISIS

I. Threatened rebel "insurrectionary general strike", planned to coincide with UN debate on Algeria, has begun ahead of schedule.

A. In Algiers, press reports state that majority of Moslem workers stayed out Monday morning. French security police reportedly were breaking open Moslem shops which had failed to open for business by 9:00 AM, and quartermaster troops were maintaining operation of city bakeries.

1. Early press reports indicated no violence.

B. Early press reports also indicate partial absenteeism among the 350,000 Algerian workers in Metropolitan France.

C. Strike is to last 8 days.

II. Strike comes at time when European-Moslem tension in Algeria is at all-time high. Acts of violence by rebels, themselves, by 1.2 million indignant "colons", or by 400,000 French military in Algeria could easily touch off major explosion.

25X1X6 A. [redacted] believes rebels will step up indiscriminate killings during strike, in hopes of provoking colons into bloody

25X1X6 retaliation. [redacted] foresees situation "similar to Budapest", with thousands of Moslems killed.

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B. [redacted] also expects rebel military groups (numbering "several thousand") along Moroccan and Tunisian borders to go into action at time of strike, attempt capture of Tlemcen (in west) and Tebessa (in east).

C. In this connection, a rebel spokesman in Libya has stated that strong rebel military offensive will be timed with strike.

III. Probably most explosive element in situation is tough attitude of colons.

A. Liberals who favor accomodation with rebels--such as mayor of Algiers--are minority.

B. Vast majority of colons view supression of rebels as fight for own lives, are increasingly fearful that Paris is ready to compromise.

1. These colon die-hards have established own counter-terrorist HQ, formed quasi-military reprisal units.

IV. Attitude of Army in showdown is another imponderable. Paris admits widespread sympathy for colons among junior officers and non-coms.

A. Recently, three Army generals in Algeria had to be "disciplined" by Paris for flirting with colons in alleged plot to overthrow metropolitan control, establish "white republic".

B. Thus, if colons attack Moslems, vigorous Army action to restore order appears unlikely.

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1. Amb. Dillon doubts that Mollet gov't would risk chance of open Army insubordination by ordering Army to act against colons.

V. In metropole, itself, Amb. Dillon believes that, should Algerian situation go "very sour", right-wing groups may attempt overthrow of Mollet gov't.

A. We have rumors of plots to assassinate leading French politicians, bomb the Ministry of Interior.

B. Dillon believes that, if Mollet gov't is unable to control Army in event of major Algerian explosion, life of Fourth Republic itself would be endangered.

C. Possible calming note is resounding defeat of both right extremists and Communists in Sunday's Paris bi-election.

1. Algeria was paramount campaign issue and winner (with 54% of votes) supported Mollet program.

D. Meanwhile, Mollet's personal emissary was recently in contact with rebel representatives in Italy, despite gov't declaration that no negotiations are possible until cease-fire.

1. Mayor of Algiers believes rebels are likely to accept Mollet's cease-fire bid, provided French do not "lose face" in UN discussion.

VI. As to UN airing, French apparently have two-fold plan.

A. Will first deny UN competence to consider "internal" matter, attack "foreign" (particularly Egyptian, Soviet) influence behind revolt.

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B. If Assembly nonetheless asserts competence, French delegation will walk out, boycott further discussion.

C. Should final UN action be official condemnation of French role in Algeria, French threaten to withdraw altogether from UN membership.

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